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ABSTRACT

An alternative program for the preparation of elementary teachers, based in part on the assumption that the development of human relations is part of the total learning process is described. The program incorporates the following special features: (1) It concentrates most of the professional training component into three full-time semester blocks taken one per year; (2) It correlates daily didactics with daily field experiences; (3) Each student becomes a member of a learning community in an elementary school; (4) The university faculty and the students form a learning community and function in an open space university classroom; (5) Specialized topics such as discipline, and values clarification, and humanistic, media, and career education activities are stressed throughout; and (6) A low advisor-advisee ratio allows for increased individualization of programming and opportunities for the development of close personal relationships. (JD)

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Excellence At a New Level for Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This article describes an alternative teacher education program which strives for a new level of excellence in teacher education. A variety of data have been collected to determine whether program goals were reached. These findings are presented to assist others in similar situations who wish to attempt to produce a high level of excellence in their schools.

EXCELLENCE AT A NEW LEVEL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Alternative programs in teacher education are as plentiful as institutions preparing teachers. Generally, such programs are short-lived, often because of the lack of total support to undertake and maintain them. To achieve a new level of excellence in teacher education, students and faculty must share common professional content and goals with experienced educators in the public schools. Moreover, excellence at a new level demands a program designed to have an impact on the personal life and behavior of its participants.

The HIP program is based in part on the assumption that the development of human relationships is part of the total learning process, and that both teachers and students need such relationships from the beginning.

The HIP program is an alternative program for the preparation of elementary teachers at the University of Missouri-Columbia. HIP is an acronym for humanizing, individualizing, and personalizing. The HIP program incorporates the following special features: (1) it concentrates most of the professional training component into three full-time semester blocks taken one per year; (2) it correlates daily didactics with daily field experiences; (3) each student becomes a member of a learning community in an elementary school; (4) the university faculty, along with the students, form a learning community and function in an open space university

classroom; (5) specialized topics such as discipline, values clarification, humanistic, drug, media, and career education activities are stressed throughout; and (6) a low advisor-advisee ratio allows for increased individualization of programming and opportunities for the development of close personal relationships.

The HIP program is offered in three sixteen-semester-hour blocks normally taken over a three year period. Each block correlates a field experience with university classroom activities. Each student is a member of both a Learning Community in a participating IGE (Willis, 1974) elementary school and the IGE Learning Community at the University which includes an interdisciplinary team of 20 professional educators. Students spend one-third of each day with their assigned elementary school Learning Community. When not on field assignments, students participate in didactic activities which are integrated and designed in two or three week increments, and conducted in an open space classroom which is available to HIP students 10 hours per day.

The professional training embraces the laboratory, clinical, and small group seminar approach to professional preparation. The didactic content in each HIP block is to varying degrees competency based and is to a large extent organized around behavioral objectives, instructional alternatives, and alternative assessment procedures.

Faculty Development

At the outset of the program the HIP staff was composed of volunteers from the regular faculty. The University of Missouri

is a conservative conventional university and the faculty is probably similar to faculties of other large state universities. Therefore, a series of intervention activities to break conventional thinking toward instruction was initiated.

The first activities of the preparation conferences were a series of games aimed toward breaking down resistance to change and becoming more familiar with one another. The participants were organized, for working sessions and classes, into three to five person small cooperative groups. These activities resulted in the faculty having respect for one another and being able to work more effectively together.

The initial task addressed by the faculty was a series of philosophical statements related to the HIP program. The statements concerned: 1) The Advisor Concept, 2) How Students Learn, 3) Parent Involvement, 4) School and Community, 5) School Organization, and 6) Curriculum. This activity is an adaptation of the "We Agree" Workshop developed by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. (Kinghorn, 1973) A sample from "How Students Learn" might be:

> WE AGREE that the student should be offered a wide range of alternatives; therefore, students will have options regarding (a) what they will learn, (b) how they will learn, (c) where they will learn, (d) when they will learn, and (e) who will assist them to learn.

As a result of the work-game sessions the faculty became dedicated to the program and to each other. Among the characteristics of the HIP program developed by the faculty are:

1. Classes which are more open than conventional college classes
2. Larger blocks of time in class
3. A home-base room which is used only for HIP classes, projects, and other activities.
4. Cooperative teaching
5. Student input to the teaching program development

From the beginning, retreats for two or three days have been available each year as a continuation of the original series of faculty self-improvement, information, and inspiration. Many times students are invited to participate. Sometimes the retreats are faculty produced and at other times retreats are presented by someone from outside the university. The most recent retreat was an introduction to ADVENTURES IN ATTITUDES (Conklin, 1978) an inspirational program for self-improvement.

INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES

During each HIP semester the students are totally emersed in the teacher-training program. Therefore, everything that the students do is related to their future occupation as a teacher. This allows the faculty to integrate the subject areas being taught. For example, one of the tasks for the students taking elementary science teaching is to read five children's books about science. The reading teacher helps in the selection of these books and students receive credit for the assignments in both reading and science.

All the classes are taught in one location so the students literally have a personalized classroom. Students decorate and display their work in this classroom.

The teaching staff meets regularly in a weekly Design Meeting which is used for planning and giving feedback on the instructional program. During these sessions problems which may have arisen can be resolved. Those problems which concern more general curriculum matters are referred to the bi-weekly Learning Community meetings, which are attended by students as well as teachers.

Special topic Seminars are planned each semester. The content of these seminars is selected by the HIP students and is open to all HIP students. Examples of seminar titles are:

Using Puppets in the Classroom
Urban and Rural Education
Humane Discipline
Questioning Strategies
Drug Education
Career Education

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

The heart of the HIP program is the advisor-advisee concept. When students enter the program they select an advisor from the HIP staff. Short staff autobiographies help in this process. When they meet the staff member, if they feel that they have not made a wise choice, they may choose again.

The advisor-advisee ratio is low, not more than 10 to 1. Advisors meet with their advisees weekly and occasionally have dinner or lunch together. Usually the relationships are close and personal. This is part of the personalizing of HIP.

Usually, there are several picnics or parties during the semester. The students produce a newsletter, the HIP Pocket, which keeps faculty, students, cooperating teachers and graduates up to date on activities in HIP. A Student Affairs committee meets weekly and discusses problems that may have arisen.

The bottom line of any teacher training program is employment. School administrators are now asking for graduates of this program. In the local schools aides from the HIP program are working in elementary classes taught by HIP graduates. The product produced by this unusual program is very special.

EVALUATION

A variety of data have been collected to determine whether program goals have been reached. These findings are presented to assist others in similar situations who wish to attempt to produce a high level of excellence in their schools.

Teachers cannot help students to feel good about themselves unless their own self concepts are strong and positive. Early in the development of the HIP program pre-post measures on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale were obtained from students. Baseline data were obtained before the students began their work in the HIP program. There were no significant differences between the self-concept scores of students entering the HIP program and the self-concept scores of students entering the traditional program on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. After only one semester in the program (and again, after five semesters) the

students in the HIP program had made significant gains in their self-concept scores. No significant gains were made by the students in the traditional program during that same time period.

The HIP students, at the end of the first semester, made significant changes in the following subtests of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, (Fitts, 1970) Self Criticism ($t = 3.27$, $p < .001$), Self Satisfaction ($t = 1.96$ $p < .05$) and Personal Self ($t = 2.25$, $p < .03$). By the end of five semesters in the program significant gains were made in the following scores: Total Positive Score ($t = 3.84$ $p < .0001$), Self Satisfaction $t = 5.25$, $p < .0001$), Behavior ($t = 4.01$, $p < .0001$), Physical Self ($t = 3.23$, $p < .003$), Personal Self ($t = 5.19$, $p < .001$), Family Self ($t = 5.00$, $p < .0001$), and Social Self ($t = 3.47$, $p < .0001$).

After the HIP program had been in operation for a few semesters, the question arose: Were the students receiving the kind of instruction and the type of educational climate that they preferred? A Learning Preference Scale (I/D/E/A, 1975) was administered to the HIP students. Students in the traditional program were used as a control group. The differences were obvious. The students in the HIP program preferred instruction which allowed for independent study and was more open and flexible. There seemed to be little doubt that the open, flexible environment did indeed match the preferences of the HIP students. Either the program was attracting students with these preferences or they were adapting to, and coming to prefer, this IGE model of education.

An important variable operating in the HIP program is how well the faculty provide appropriate role models. The HIP faculty,

then, should be projecting an image of warmth, sincerity, openness and caring. The students should have positive attitudes toward these faculty members. Students should see in these faculty, instructors who themselves are striving for a higher level of excellence.

An attitude scale was developed which asked students to rate their instructors on how concerned and caring they were (e.g., my professor generally shows a great deal of concern for me as a person; my professor generally makes me feel good about myself). The HIP students rated their instructors significantly higher on this scale than did a comparable sample of students from the traditional education program on the same campus. The mean score given the professors by the HIP students was 138.2 (S.D. = 14.9) while the corresponding mean score given professors by non-HIP students was only 107.1 (S.D. = 19.2). This difference was highly significant ($t = 6.13$, $p < .001$).

A final important piece of evidence that education programs can reach a higher level of excellence comes from the response of the public school community. Local and other schools offer continuous unsolicited testimony concerning the high quality of HIP aides, student teachers, and graduates. There is an obvious preference in local schools for HIP aides and student teachers and a real demand for HIP graduates throughout the state.

Listed below are sample answers to three of the open-ended questions asked of the HIP faculty and public school personnel.

1. MY OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE TEACHER PREPARATION IN THE HIP PROGRAM IS:

Excellent.

Great. We ask for only HIP aides because we know we will receive quality work and supervision.

The best teacher education program, not only in the College of Education, but anywhere in the state.

That it is an outstanding program.

2. WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER STUDENTS I HAVE WORKED WITH, THE HIP STUDENTS ARE:

More at ease, not afraid of the kids, adjust more quickly to new responsibilities, can evaluate teacher methods and form their style.

More dedicated, experienced, and take more initiative.

About the same caliber academically, but generally have a more positive attitude and dedication toward teaching.

More dedicated, better prepared, more deeply involved with individual differences in the children.

Always well-prepared, enthusiastic and cooperative.

More enthusiastic, more dedicated to the teaching profession, and more responsible than most undergraduate students.

3. I BELIEVE THE MAJOR STRENGTH OF THE HIP PROGRAM IS:

Deeper involvement between HIP faculty, students, and cooperating teachers.

Extensive aide work in the public schools which is coordinated with professional education courses, advisor/advisee relationships, student input into organization of program.

Early field experience, close contact with each other and faculty.

Excellent attitudes and abilities of the students you send to us.

The University's relationship with public elementary schools has been greatly enhanced by the initiation and continuation of this HIP program. Increased contacts with the schools as faculty members supervise aides and student teachers have provided a climate for cooperation rarely possible in the traditional elementary education program.

The Advisory Council, composed of students, faculty and cooperating teachers, provides the formal forum for sharing of ideas and concerns. Through this Advisory Council public school educators make a contribution to the development of future teachers. University faculty have additional opportunities to stay current regarding public school problems, techniques, innovative programs and other changes.

One of the greatest strengths of this pre-service program is the extensive supervised field experience. This ability of students to apply the theory and other textbook concepts learned through professional education courses to an actual classroom setting is invaluable. Also, HIP students are able to share with the cooperating teachers ideas, theories, and current research they have learned.

Student, cooperating teacher and the university faculty conferences are held on a regular basis. The faculty advisors make visits to the schools to observe students. Typically the student has the same faculty advisor during the three year period so a close advisor/advisee relationship develops.

In summary, the HIP program at the University of Missouri-Columbia has been in operation seven years. It has provided

successful alternative experiences. There is evidence that this program has, in fact, had an impact on the personal life and behavior of all its participants. Evaluation indicates graduates of the program have reached a new level of excellence in teacher education. There are facets of this program which would be beneficial to other teacher education programs. This alternative program serves as a mechanism to bring teacher educators and practitioners together in the decision-making process for the purpose of enhancing the educational experiences of all concerned: school children, college students, cooperating teachers, and teacher educators -- a true symbiotic relationship.

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